

Jacobus de Voragine.

The GOLDEN
LEGEND
or LIVES
of the SAINTS
as ENGLISHED
by WILLIAM
CAXTON
VOL THREE



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Here followeth the Life of S. George Martyr.

S. George was a knight and born in Cappadocia. On a time he came in to the province of Libya, to a city which is said Silene. And by this city was a stagne or a pond like a sea, wherein was a dragon which envenomed all the country. And

on a time the people were assembled for to slay **The Life** him, and when they saw him they fled. And ^{of S.} when he came nigh the city he venomed the ^{George} people with his breath, and therefore the people of the city gave to him every day two sheep for to feed him, because he should do no harm to the people, and when the sheep failed there was taken a man and a sheep. Then was an ordinance made in the town that there should be taken the children and young people of them of the town by lot, and every each one as it fell, were he gentle or poor, should be delivered when the lot fell on him or her. So it happed that many of them of the town were then delivered, insomuch that the lot fell upon the king's daughter, whereof the king was sorry, and said unto the people: For the love of the gods take gold and silver and all that I have, and let me have my daughter. They said: How sir! ye have made and ordained the law, and our children be now dead, and ye would do the contrary. Your daughter shall be given, or else we shall burn you and your house.

When the king saw he might no more do, he began to weep, and said to his daughter: Now shall I never see thine espousals. Then returned he to the people and demanded eight days' respite, and they granted it to him. And when the eight days were passed they came to him and said: Thou seest that the city perisheth: Then did the king do array his daughter like as she should be wedded, and embraced her, kissed her and gave her his benediction, and after, led her to the place where the dragon was.

When she was there S. George passed by, and when he saw the lady he demanded the lady what she made there and she said: Go ye your way

The Life fair young man, that ye perish not also. Then of S. said he : Tell to me what have ye and why weep George ye, and doubt ye of nothing. When she saw that he would know, she said to him how she was delivered to the dragon. Then said S. George : Fair daughter, doubt ye no thing hereof for I shall help thee in the name of Jesu Christ. She said : For God's sake, good knight, go your way, and abide not with me, for ye may not deliver me. Thus as they spake together the dragon appeared and came running to them, and S. George was upon his horse, and drew out his sword and garnished him with the sign of the cross, and rode hardily against the dragon which came towards him, and smote him with his spear and hurt him sore and threw him to the ground. And after said to the maid : Deliver to me your girdle, and bind it about the neck of the dragon and be not afeard. When she had done so the dragon followed her as it had been a meek beast and debonair. Then she led him into the city, and the people fled by mountains and valleys, and said : Alas ! alas ! we shall be all dead. Then S. George said to them : Ne doubt ye no thing, without more, believe ye in God, Jesu Christ, and do ye to be baptized and I shall slay the dragon. Then the king was baptized and all his people, and S. George slew the dragon and smote off his head, and commanded that he should be thrown in the fields, and they took four carts with oxen that drew him out of the city.

Then were there well fifteen thousand men baptized, without women and children, and the king did do make a church there of our Lady and of S. George, in the which yet sourdeth a fountain of living water, which healeth sick people that

drink thereof. After this the king offered to The Life
of S.
George S. George as much money as there might be numbered, but he refused all and commanded that it should be given to poor people for God's sake ; and enjoined the king four things, that is, that he should have charge of the churches, and that he should honour the priests and hear their service diligently, and that he should have pity on the poor people, and after, kissed the king and departed.

Now it happed that in the time of Diocletian and Maximian, which were emperors, was so great persecution of christian men that within a month were martyred well twenty-two thousand, and therefore they had so great dread that some renied and forsook God and did sacrifice to the idols. When S. George saw this, he left the habit of a knight and sold all that he had, and gave it to the poor, and took the habit of a christian man, and went into the middle of the paynims and began to cry : All the gods of the paynims and gentiles be devils, my God made the heavens and is very God. Then said the provost to him : Of what presumption cometh this to thee, that thou sayest that our gods be devils ? And say to us what thou art and what is thy name. He answered anon and said : I am named George, I am a gentleman, a knight of Cappadocia, and have left all for to serve the God of heaven. Then the provost enforced himself to draw him unto his faith by fair words, and when he might not bring him thereto he did do raise him on a gibbet ; and so much beat him with great staves and broches of iron, that his body was all tobroken in pieces. And after he did do take brands of iron and join them to his sides, and his bowels which then appeared he did do frot with salt, and so sent

The Life him into prison, but our Lord appeared to him the
of S. same night with great light and comforted him
George much sweetly. And by this great consolation he
took to him so good heart that he doubted no
torment that they might make him suffer. Then,
when Dacian the provost saw that he might not
surmount him, he called his enchanter and said to
him: I see that these christian people doubt not
our torments. The enchanter bound himself, upon
his head to be smitten off, if he overcame not his
crafts. Then he did take strong venom and
meddled it with wine, and made invocation of the
names of his false gods, and gave it to S. George
to drink. S. George took it and made the sign of
the cross on it, and anon drank it without grieveing
him any thing. Then the enchanter made it more
stronger than it was tofore of venom, and gave it
him to drink, and it grieved him nothing. When
the enchanter saw that, he kneeled down at the
feet of S. George and prayed him that he would
make him christian. And when Dacian knew
that he was become christian he made to smite off
his head. And after, on the morn, he made S.
George to be set between two wheels, which were
full of swords, sharp and cutting on both sides, but
anon the wheels were broken and S. George escaped
without hurt. And then commanded
Dacian that they should put him in a caldron full
of molten lead, and when S. George entered
therein, by the virtue of our Lord it seemed that
he was in a bath well at ease. Then Dacian
seeing this began to assuage his ire, and to flatter
him by fair words, and said to him: George, the
patience of our gods is over great unto thee which
hast blasphemed them, and done to them great
despite, then fair, and right sweet son, I pray thee

that thou return to our law and make sacrifice to the idols, and leave thy folly, and I shall enhance thee to great honour and worship. Then began S. George to smile, and said to him: Wherefore saidst thou not to me thus at the beginning? I am ready to do as thou sayest. Then was Dacian glad and made to cry over all the town that all the people should assemble for to see George make sacrifice which so much had striven there against. Then was the city arrayed and feast kept throughout all the town, and all came to the temple for to see him.

When S. George was on his knees, and they supposed that he would have worshipped the idols, he prayed our Lord God of heaven that he would destroy the temple and the idol in the honour of his name, for to make the people to be converted. And anon the fire descended from heaven and burnt the temple, and the idols, and their priests, and sith the earth opened and swallowed all the cinders and ashes that were left. Then Dacian made him to be brought tofore him, and said to him: What be the evil deeds that thou hast done, and also great untruth? Then said to him S. George: Ah, sir, believe it not, but come with me and see how I shall sacrifice. Then said Dacian to him: I see well thy fraud and thy barat, thou wilt make the earth to swallow me, like as thou hast the temple and my gods. Then said S. George: O caitiff, tell me how may thy gods help thee when they may not help themselves! Then was Dacian so angry that he said to his wife: I shall die for anger if I may not surmount and overcome this man. Then said she to him: Evil and cruel tyrant! ne seest thou not the great virtue of the christian people? I said to thee

The Life
of S.
George

The Life well that thou shouldst not do to them any harm,
of S. for their God fighteth for them, and know thou
George well that I will become christian. Then was
Dacian much abashed and said to her: Wilt thou
be christian? Then he took her by the hair, and
did do beat her cruelly. Then demanded she
of S. George: What may I become because I
am not christened? Then answered the blessed
George: Doubt thee nothing, fair daughter, for
thou shalt be baptized in thy blood. Then began
she to worship our Lord Jesu Christ, and so she
died and went to heaven. On the morn Dacian
gave his sentence that S. George should be drawn
through all the city, and after, his head should be
smitten off. Then made he his prayer to our
Lord that all they that desired any boon might
get it of our Lord God in his name, and a voice
came from heaven which said that it which he had
desired was granted; and after he had made his
orison his head was smitten off, about the year of
our Lord two hundred and eighty-seven. When
Dacian went homeward from the place where he
was beheaded towards his palace, fire fell down
from heaven upon him and burnt him and all his
servants.

Gregory of Tours telleth that there were some
that bare certain relics of S. George, and came
into a certain oratory in a hospital, and on the
morning when they should depart they could not
move the door till they had left there part of their
relics. It is also found in the history of Antioch,
that when the christian men went over sea to
conquer Jerusalem, that one, a right fair young
man, appeared to a priest of the host and counselled
him that he should bear with him a little of the
relics of S. George, for he was conductor of the

battle, and so he did so much that he had some. The Life
And when it was so that they had assieged of S.
Jerusalem and durst not mount ne go up on the George
walls for the quarrels and defence of the Saracens,
they saw appertly S. George which had white
arms with a red cross, that went up tofore them
on the walls, and they followed him, and so
was Jerusalem taken by his help. And between
Jerusalem and port Jaffa, by a town called Ramys,
is a chapel of S. George which is now desolate
and uncovered, and therein dwell christian Greeks.
And in the said chapel lieth the body of S.
George, but not the head. And there lie his
father and mother and his uncle, not in the chapel
but under the wall of the chapel; and the keepers
will not suffer pilgrims to come therein, but if
they pay two ducats, and therefore come but few
therein, but offer without the chapel at an altar.
And there is seven years and seven lents of
pardon; and the body of S. George lieth in the
middle of the quire or choir of the said chapel,
and in his tomb is an hole that a man may put in
his hand. And when a Saracen, being mad, is
brought thither, and if he put his head in the hole
he shall anon be made perfectly whole, and have
his wit again.

This blessed and holy martyr S. George is
patron of this realm of England and the cry of
men of war. In the worship of whom is founded
the noble order of the garter, and also a noble
college in the castle of Windsor by kings of
England, in which college is the heart of S.
George, which Sigismund, the emperor of Almayne,
brought and gave for a great and a precious relique
to King Harry the fifth. And also the said Sigis-
mund was a brother of the said garter, and also

The there is a piece of his head, which college is nobly
Life of endowed to the honour and worship of Almighty
S. Mark God and his blessed martyr S. George. Then
let us pray unto him that he be special protector
and defender of this realm.